

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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O 212248Z FEB 78 ZFF6
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 294
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 488

EXDIS (HANDLE AS NODIS)

USDEL NO 7

FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, XF, US

SUBJ: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN - FEBRUARY 21

1. AM SENDING THIS EVENING BY SEPTTEL A FULL REPORT OF MY
TALK TODAY WITH DAYAN. IN ADDITION, WANT TO GIVE YOU NOW
A SUMMARY OF TWO-HOUR MEETING SAM LEWIS AND I HAD THIS
EVENING WITH BEGIN. WILL SEND COMPLETE REPORT TOMORROW.

2. WITH BEGIN WERE DAYAN, YADIN, WEIZMAN AND SOME HALF DOZEN
PRIME MINISTRY AND FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS. AS I HAD
EARLIER WITH DAYAN, I EXPLAINED THAT I HAD THOUGHT I WOULD
BE IN POSITION TO CONVEY EGYPTIAN COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT
DECLARATION BUT WE HAD NOW HAD WORD THAT SADAT WANTED
PERSONALLY TO REVIEW THE EGYPTIAN FORMULATIONS. BEGIN
SAID HE ASSUMED I WOULD RETURN FROM CAIRO ON FEBRUARY 24
WITH AN EGYPTIAN TEXT, AND HE LOOKED FORWARD TO HEARING
WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO REPORT. BEGIN THEN RAISED THE PROBLEM
OF ASYMMETRY BETWEEN THE STATUS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

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AND THAT OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE. ISRAEL WANTS WORK OF
THE MILITARY COMMITTEE TO CONTINUE IN CAIRO, HE SAID, BUT
IF POLITICAL COMMITTEE REMAINS RECESSED THERE WILL BE A FUND-
AMENTAL INEQUALITY BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. WHY, BEGIN ASKED,
SHOULD NOT THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE BE RECONVENED IN
JERUSALEM? IT COULD RESUME ITS WORK ON THE DECLARATION OF
PRINCIPLES, THIS TIME HOWEVER IN A MORE QUIET ATMOSPHERE,

WITHOUT FANFARE AND WITHOUT SO MUCH PRESS ATTENTION. BEGIN ASKED THAT I TAKE THIS UP WITH THE EGYPTIANS. I SAID I WOULD GLADLY DO SO BUT HAD TO GIVE MY HONEST JUDGMENT THAT PRESIDENT SADAT HAD BEEN QUITE FIRM IN SAYING THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO RECONVENE THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE UNTIL WORK ON THE DECLARATION IS COMPLETED. BEGIN SAID IF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE IS NOT RECONVENED GOI WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF WHETHER OR NOT TO SEND WEIZMAN TO CAIRO FOR MILITARY COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS. HE ADDED THAT SITUATION CANNOT CONTINUE OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME IN WHICH ONE COMMITTEE SITS IN CAIRO BUT THE OTHER IN JERUSALEM IS SUSPENDED. I URGED THAT GOI BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT CO-RELATION IN TIMING OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEE MEETINGS, STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING CONTINUITY OF THE ONE DIRECT LINK REMAINING FROM JERUSALEM AND ISMAILIYA SUMMITS AND THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD PRESSED SADAT TO CONTINUE MILITARY COMMITTEE TALKS.

3. I THEN RAISED WITH BEGIN, AS I HAD EARLIER IN THE DAY WITH DAYAN, THE POSSIBILITY OF MY SOUNDING THE EGYPTIANS OUT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUB-COMMITTEE AS A FIRST STEP TOWARD RENEWAL OF THE WORK OF THE FULL POLITICAL COMMITTEE. BEGIN AGREED BUT POINTEDLY REMARKED THAT SUB-COMMITTEE SHOULD SIT IN JERUSALEM, NOT CAIRO, AND SHOULD CLEARLY BE INTENDED AS PRELIMINARY TO THE RECONVENING OF THE FULL POLITICAL COMMITTEE. LATER IN CONVERSATION,
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DAYAN EXPRESSED VIEW -- AND BEGIN AGREED -- THAT IF A SUB-COMMITTEE IS CREATED IT SHOULD ADDRESS ITSELF TO ITEM C OF THE AGENDA (I.E., PEACE TREATIES), NOT TO ITEM B (WEST BANK AND GAZA) SINCE THE LATTER IS CLEARLY TOO POLITICAL TO BE HANDLED BY LOWER-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES.

4. WE THEN WENT INTO A LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM OF OUR DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WITHDRAWAL PROVISIONS OF RESOLUTION 242. DAYAN LED OFF BY RECOUNTING BRIEFLY OUR DISCUSSION EARLIER TODAY. AFTER SAYING THAT HE COMPLETELY AGREED WITH WHAT DAYAN HAD TOLD THE SECRETARY AND THE PRESIDENT ON THIS SUBJECT LAST WEEK, BEGIN LAUNCHED INTO A LONG AND DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE NEGOTIATING HISTORY OF 242 IN SUPPORT OF THE GOI VIEW THAT IT DOES NOT REQUIRE WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS, ONLY WITHDRAWAL "FROM TERRITORIES." BEGIN TEMPERED THIS, HOWEVER, BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT 242 DOES ALLOW DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS. HE NOW SAW THREE: A FRENCH/ARAB/SOVIET INTERPRETATION, AN AMERICAN INTERPRETATION, AND AN ISRAELI INTERPRETATION. ISRAELI INTERPRETATION, BEGIN INSISTED, IS COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED. ISRAEL RECOGNIZES RIGHT OF OTHERS TO PUT FORWARD THEIR OWN INTERPRETATIONS, BUT FOR ITSELF IT WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY FORMULATION THAT WOULD DESTROY

ITS OWN POSITION. CONFIRMING WHAT DAYAN HAD SAID IN THE MORNING MEETING, BEGIN STRESSED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT SAY IN ADVANCE OF NEGOTIATIONS THAT WITHDRAWAL APPLIES TO THE WEST BANK. I STRESSED THAT IT HAD BEEN CLEARLY OUR UNDERSTANDING, AT LEAST UNTIL LAST JULY, THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL AGREED THAT THE WITHDRAWAL PROVISION OF 242 APPLIES TO ALL FRONTS; NOT TO ALL TERRITORY ON EACH FRONT, BUT AT LEAST TO SOME TERRITORY ON EACH. I SAID I HAD TO TELL THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THE POSITION HE WAS TAKING COULD HAVE A SERIOUS IMPACT ON SADAT'S AND JUSSEIN'S THINKING, AND ON PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

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EXDIS (HANDLE AS NODIS)

USDEL NO 7

FROM ATHERTON

5. DAYAN THEN INTERVENED TO SUGGEST A FORMULA. WE NEED NOT SAY IN THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, HE PROPOSED, THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT AGREE TO APPLICATION OF 242 TO THE WEST BANK. EXACT LANGUAGE OF 242 CAN BE USED AND EACH PARTY CAN INTERPRET IT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS VIEWS. IN NEGOTIATIONS EACH PARTY CAN PUT FORWARD ITS PROPOSAL; ARABS WILL PUT FORWARD THEIRS CALLING FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK, AND ISRAEL WILL PUT FORWARD ITS. ISRAEL OF COURSE CANNOT BE ASKED TO ADOPT THE ARAB PROPOSAL FROM THE OUTSET, BUT IT WILL BE WILLING TO DISCUSS IT FULLY IN NEGOTIATIONS. THIS IS MOST ISRAEL CAN DO, DAYAN SAID, AND HE DID NOT THINK MORE COULD BE EXPECTED OF IT. I SAID QUITE HONESTLY I DID NOT THINK THIS WOULD BE SUFFICIENT. ARABS WOULD ASK WHETHER THE BEGIN

GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS THE APPLICABILITY OF 242 TO THE WEST BANK
AND WHEN THEY LEARN THAT IT DOES NOT WILL REGARD THAT AS
A SERIOUS RETROGRESSION. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION, BEGIN
IN EFFECT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT POSITION OF HIS GOVERNMENT ON
NON-APPLICABILITY OF RESOLUTION 242 AND PRINCIPLE OF WITH-
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DRAWAL TO WEST BANK WAS CHANGE FROM POSITION OF LABOR GOVERN-
MENTS SINCE 1967, REFLECTING MANDATE OF VOTERS FOR LIKUD
PARTY PLATFORM IN THIS RESPECT.

6. CONVERSATION CONTINUED IN THIS VEIN FOR A WHILE LONGER, BUT WITH NO
INDICATION OF ANY GIVE ON THE ISRAELI SIDE.
DESPITE CLEAR DIFFERENCE OF VIEWS MEETING WAS QUITE CORDIAL
THROUGHOUT AND BEGIN WAS OBVIOUSLY RESTED AND IN EXCELLENT
HUMOR. BEGIN SUGGESTED THAT I COME TO SEE HIM AGAIN NEXT
SUNDAY AFTERNOON FOLLOWING THE WEEKLY CABINET MEETING.
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